

May 18, 2005

Kindia Howard

Re: House Bill No. 4473

Delhi Charter Township is strongly opposed to House Bill No. 4473 as it absolutely contradicts and undermines our mission to provide for the health, safety, and welfare of both tenants and landlords whom we serve through the Registration and Inspection of Residential Rental Property (Township Ordinance No. 102.3).

Approximately ten (10) years ago, the Township received complaints from landlords in an older neighborhood dominated with rundown rental units. The basic complaint was related to rental units that were used to sell drugs along with the fear and abuse neighbors and landlords experienced. We subsequently, initiated a rental inspection program in 1998 at no cost to the landlord along with creating a neighborhood watch program with our Police Department. This proactive action improved the quality of both the interior and exterior of rental units and rid us of known drug houses thereby creating a safer neighborhood for both the landlords and the tenants.

The success of this inspection program was extended to all known rental units in our community. Then in 2003, as our budget became more strained, we introduced a registration and inspection fee schedule for all rental units based upon the labor costs to administer and implement this program on a bi-annual basis.

We convinced our Township Board that the general fund should not underwrite this program and we convinced the landlords that we would establish fees based solely upon the cost of service. Many landlords agreed that registering and inspecting all rental units would place them all on the same playing field in the rental business.

In addition to providing for safe and code-compliant rental units, there is a significant bonus to this program by "keeping up" the property values of all rental units. Maintaining property values based upon maintained properties due to an effective rental inspection program translates to maintaining taxable values for all taxing jurisdictions including the State of Michigan's Education Tax and all of our school districts.

Therefore, focusing on House Bill No. 4473 to provide relief for landlords and their tenants is extremely shortsighted. We must all together provide for the health and safety of our tenants and landlords. During this time of economic stress at all levels of government and education, we must provide for the economic welfare of all our citizens. This bill will result in declining property values resulting in declining tax revenues, which will affect us all.

Finally, limiting our ability to inspect all rental properties in a uniform manner will recreate the neighborhood Delhi Township has been striving to stabilize. That type of neighborhood will also increase demands on our fire and police services, which are also underfunded.

Sincerely,

DELHI CHARTER TOWNSHIP

John B. Elsinga
Township Manager